

First Opinion: El Poder de la Valentía de Cruzar Barreras (The Power of Courage to Cross Barriers)

Morales, Yuyi. *Dreamers*. New York: Neal Porter Books. 2018. Print.



Lorena Ocampo with Allison Segarra Hansen

Dreamers follows the journey of a woman and child as they bravely cross the border from Mexico to the United States. The story provides beautiful visuals as well as written imagery. This allows the reader to do something I believe is so necessary in our current world, yet not regularly done—imagine yourself walking in someone else’s footsteps.

Although the focus of the text is on the mother and her dreams for her child, we can imagine the impact of her decision and her determination on her child’s future. We can feel her hopes, dreams, bravery and brilliance being passed on to her child through her sheer will. I shared this book with my comadre, Lorena Ocampo, someone who I believe is a scholar in the field of life, specifically in working tirelessly and endlessly to ensure that all of her dreams for her children could become a reality. These are her words to describe *Dreamers*, “El libro trata de

la necesidad de emigrar a otro país con la esperanza de un futuro mejor. Donde se deja todo lo que se tiene, para empezar sin nada.” (The book deals with the need to emigrate to another country with the hope of a better future, where you leave everything that you have to begin again with nothing).

In recent years I have heard immigrants called to question repeatedly: why? Why would they leave their homes and families? Why would they put themselves and their children through peril? *Dreamers* allows the reader to perhaps begin to see the answers, to begin to visualize the dream of a loving mother who would do anything for her children. When asked to describe the relationship between this story and the power and brilliance of immigrants, specifically Mexican Americans, Ocampo wrote, “Tiene relacion con el poder de la valentia de cruzar barreras como el idioma, costumbres y estilo de vida. Como imigrantes mexicanos vemos en nuestros hijos Mexico-Americanos la oportunidad de ver un sueño realizado.” (It is related to the power of courage to cross barriers like language, customs, and way of life. As Mexican immigrants, we see in our Mexican American children the opportunity to see a dream come true). Lorena is one of those courageous mothers, like the main character in *Dreamers*. She shared:

Mi vida se relaciona con esta historia, porque llegue a este país cruzando no solo un puente, sino entrar a un mundo nuevo jamás imaginado un idioma, comida, cultura diferente a la mía. No fue fácil vencer estas barreras. Pero gracias a la decisión de tomar la educación como herramienta hoy tengo una vida llena de sueños. (My life is related to this story because I came to this country crossing not only a bridge but entering a new world I never imagined [with] language, food, [and] culture different than mine. It was not easy to overcome these barriers. But thanks to the decision to use education as a tool, today I have a life full of dreams).

Lorena highlights another theme of power within both her life and the text: the power of education. While in this context, the power of education is harnessed by Mexican immigrants to create the lives that they dream about. However, I would like to challenge us to think about the power of education for those who denigrate immigrants. How can those of us with the privilege of being born here educate ourselves on the challenges faced by those who make the perilous journey across our southern borders? How can we learn the details of our American immigration system and how it functions? How can we gain a deeper understanding of what it truly takes to become an American citizen and the cost of waiting to cross the border legally? This is the type of education I dream about for my fellow Americans.

As for Lorena, her hopes for future readers of *Dreamers* is that they are able to see their dreams come true, to find the power to shine in the world, and to travel the world through reading. (Me gustaria que los lectores encuentren en este libro la esperanza de poder ver sus sueños echos realidad y encontrar el poder brillar en el mundo y viajar en el mundo de la lectura).

Works Cited

Morales, Yuyi. *Dreamers*. New York: Neal Porter Books, 2019. Print.

About the Authors

Lorena Ocampo is a grandmother, mother, sister, wife, and immigrant. She has been a parent/guardian educator and advocate for 16 years. She is originally from Ciudad de Mexico (Mexico City).

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